Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals Extended Diploma

January 2022

Paper reference **31599H**

Children's Play, Learning and Development

UNIT 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice

Part A

You do not need any other materials.

Instructions

- **Part A** contains material for the completion of the preparatory work for the set task.
- **Part A** is given to learners **seven weeks** before **Part B** is taken under formal supervision as scheduled by Pearson.
- **Part A** must be given to learners on the specified date so that learners can prepare as directed and monitored.
- **Part A** is specific to each series and this material must only be issued to learners who have been entered to undertake the task in that series.
- **Part B** contains unseen material and is issued to learners at the start of the specified formal supervised assessment session on the timetabled date specified by Pearson.

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Instructions to Teachers/Tutors

This set task has a preparatory period. **Part A** sets out how learners should prepare for the completion of the unseen task in **Part B** under supervised conditions.

Part A should be issued to learners **seven weeks** prior to undertaking **Part B** of the assessment.

Learners should be provided with the opportunity to conduct independent research in order to select and read secondary source materials such as articles and journals. Centres may need to make facilities available to learners to support independent work. Learners are advised to spend approximately **8–10 hours** on selecting and reading their secondary sources and that spending any longer on this is unlikely to advantage them. Learners may bring their selected secondary sources into the monitored sessions, and these will be subject to monitoring by the teacher/tutor.

Learners should be monitored in **six scheduled hours** provided by the centre to compile notes on their secondary research. During this time they may only have access to:

- the internet to carry out searches and to access secondary sources in relation to their research
- outcomes of independent research such as sources that they have selected.

Learners must work independently and must not be given guidance or feedback on the completion of the preparatory work. Learners must not prepare potential responses.

Learners may take up to four A4 sides of notes into the supervised assessment. Learner notes are the outcome of independent preparation and support learners in responding to the additional information and activities presented only in **Part B**. The notes may be handwritten or typed in a 12 point size font.

Learner notes can only include:

- facts, figures and data relating to secondary sources covering the article's area of research
- the research methods used in the learner's own secondary research.

Other content is not permitted.

In addition to the four pages of notes, learners should use the monitored sessions to prepare a list of sources that they have used, to take into the supervised assessment.

Teachers/Tutors should note that:

- learner notes produced under monitored conditions must be checked to ensure that they comply with the limitations
- learner notes should be retained by the centre between the monitored sessions and the formal supervised assessment
- learner notes should be retained by the centre after the completion of assessment and may be requested by Pearson.

Centres should refer to the *Instructions for Conducting External Assessments (ICEA)* document for full information on the correct conduct of monitored assessment.

Instructions for Learners

Read the set task information carefully.

In **Part B** you will be asked to carry out specific written activities using the information in this **Part A** booklet and your own research on this topic.

In your preparation for **Part B** using this **Part A** booklet you may prepare short notes to refer to when completing the set task. Your notes may be up to four A4 sides and may be handwritten or typed in a 12 point size font. Your notes can only include:

- facts, figures and data relating to secondary sources covering the article's area of research
- the research methods used in your own secondary research.

Other content is not permitted.

You will complete **Part B** under supervised conditions.

You must work independently and should not share your work with other learners.

Your teacher will provide a schedule for the **six hours** of monitored preparation.

Your teacher cannot give you feedback during the preparation period.

Set Task Brief

You are required to use your understanding of research methodologies and associated issues related to a piece of current research on the early years education issue, and to use your own skills in carrying out secondary research around the issue.

It is recommended that you spend approximately **8–10 hours** on carrying out your secondary research.

To prepare for the set task in **Part B** you must carry out the following:

1. Analyse the article.
2. Carry out your own independent secondary research based on the content of the article. You must use at least three secondary sources in your research.
3. You must prepare the following for your final supervised assessment:
    - a list of your secondary sources
    - notes on your secondary research – you can take in no more than four A4 pages of notes into the **Part B** supervised session.

During the supervised time for **Part B** you will have access to this material.

You will be required to address questions, based on the given article and your own secondary research.

You will have **3 hours** under supervised conditions in which to complete your final assessment.

Part A Set Task Information

Men in Childcare: A report from the London Early Years foundation (LEYF)

Does it matter to children, what do they say?

Dr Helen Perkins, Tracey Edwards and June O'Sullivan MBE

Purpose of the Research

Whilst there has been significant interest from researchers and government to increase the number of males working in early childhood, much of the research focuses on the negative aspects of men working with young children such as safeguarding issues.

In this report we explore children's views about whether the gender of the staff impacts their choice of activities. We focus specifically on nurseries where children have access to male and female teachers. Men in childcare is the subject of much debate; thus, there is a need to recognise the complexity of the issue and identify what value there is to the children in employing males in early years settings.

Research questions

- How do children perceive male teachers?
- How do children characterise their relationship with the male teachers?
- Do children consistently choose staff they like for the activities they do well rather than the associate gender connection? (For example: choosing a woman to play football because she is really good rather than a man)?

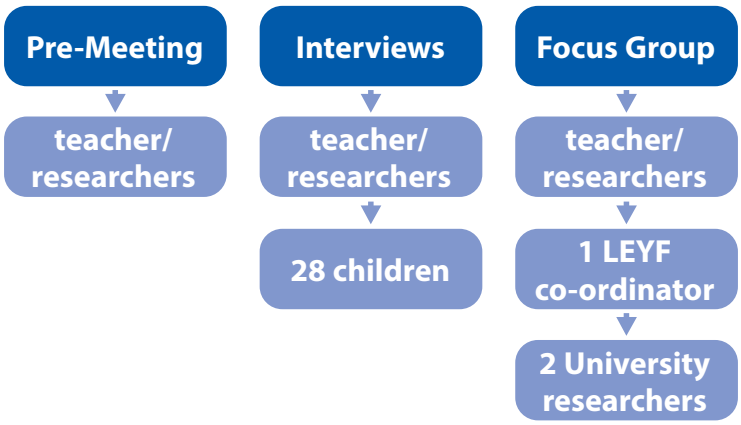
We reviewed statistical and legislative changes of men in childcare in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world since the initial research was commissioned. Teachers and children contributed to the research, which includes data collected through interview, co-constructed drawings and collaborative narratives (built with the children). Photographs of familiar staff (male and female – with staff consent) were used to provoke dialogue that was recorded for later analyses.

Methodology

This research is mainly qualitative and based on a sociocultural perspective, which stresses the impact and importance of interactions between children and the culture in which they live (Vygotsky, 1929). The study used a mixed methods approach, for our purpose, interviews and a focus group were appropriate data collection instruments.

Data was collected through interviews with the children and collaborative narratives were drawn from the researchers in a focus group discussion with the teacher-researchers (Early Years Educators). These were analysed, drawing on discourse and thematic analysis as a methodological framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Our key analytics are interactions, choice and reason. Transcripts were analysed in terms of how concepts of gender stereotypes affect how and why children make choices in terms of gender and activity.



Participants and Data Collection points

Interviews

Trust is an important part of this research process as children are involved. Therefore, teachers who are familiar to the children conducted the interviews (Flewitt, 2014). Nurseries were briefed as to the nature of the study and consented to participate. Interviews were carried out in the children's nurseries by familiar teachers. Each teacher-researcher (EYE) identified four children (two male, two female). There is a potential issue in respect of validity in using several researchers, therefore, prior to commencing interviews with the children, the teacher-researchers met to agree on their understanding of the process and to agree the descriptions of the types of play. Photographs of familiar staff (male and female) and images of a range of play activities were used to lead the discussion with the children:

- Superhero play
- Cooking
- Construction e.g. Lego, junk modelling
- Science experiments (mini-beast activity. We said this activity must involve a member of staff holding the insect)
- Dolls (washing)
- Stories and songs
- Football
- Trains
- Skipping ropes.

In addition, the children were asked to talk about:

- Who takes care of you here at nursery?
- What kind of games and activities do you like at nursery?
- Let's think about stories/books – who do you like to share stories/books with?
- Choose a male photo – What stories/books do you share with….
- Choose a female photo – What stories/books do you share with….
- What is your favourite song (at nursery), who sings with you?

These additional questions were in response to the findings from the previous report which found that children chose female teachers for reading and singing (Chambers and O'Sullivan, 2012).

Age appropriate scripts were used for researchers to introduce the activity to the children to ensure they understood their right to 'play'. Permission was sought confirming that the child would like to participate in the activity. This included an age appropriate explanation that the data will be used to tell other people about what children like to do in nursery. We wanted to give voice to the children's thoughts and feelings about their experiences in nursery (Nutbrown, 2018). One to one semi-structured interviews seemed to us to be the most appropriate method to enable the children to articulate and explain their choices in their own words. Interviews were conducted weekly over a three-week period to ensure consistency. For the most part children were open to participate, in one setting, one male child chose not to participate fully, and therefore his data has been excluded.

Focus Group

The focus group comprised 6 teacher-researchers who conducted the interviews with the children, 2 researchers from the University and the Nursery group coordinator. The focus group allowed for triangulation of the data (Greene, 2013), albeit from different perspectives and sources, which according to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) can provide a broad yet focused perspective. Their definition resonated with our mixed method approach.

Analysing the data

The data from the children's interviews were presented by the teacher-researchers at the focus group; this discussion was recorded. The audio recording and the written from the children's interviews were analysed using content and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The second layer of analysis included the teacher-researchers analysis of the children's interviews. This qualitative data added useful description of context, including time, place and knowledge of the children's home and family life.

The third layer came from the teacher-researchers' reflexive discussion in the focus group, holding a mirror to their own practice, values and beliefs which added a layer of thinking that has informed the findings and recommendations.

Findings

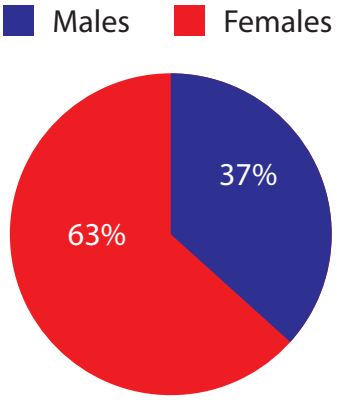
Findings from the activity with children collected by teacher-researchers: from the 12 settings that took part in the research only 7 sets of data were analysed for these findings. This was due to time restraints on the setting and staffing and in some cases a misunderstanding of the processes. Staff from the 7 settings included 7 managers, 3 male and 4 females and a total of 109 staff. This consisted of 99 female staff (72 full-time including 4 managers and 22 part-time) and 10 male staff (10 full-time including 3 managers). This puts male staff at just over 9% of the total staffing which is 7% above the national average.

*A little under two thirds of the children chose female staff. (**Table 1**). This was a significant finding as in three of the settings the only male teacher was also the manager.*

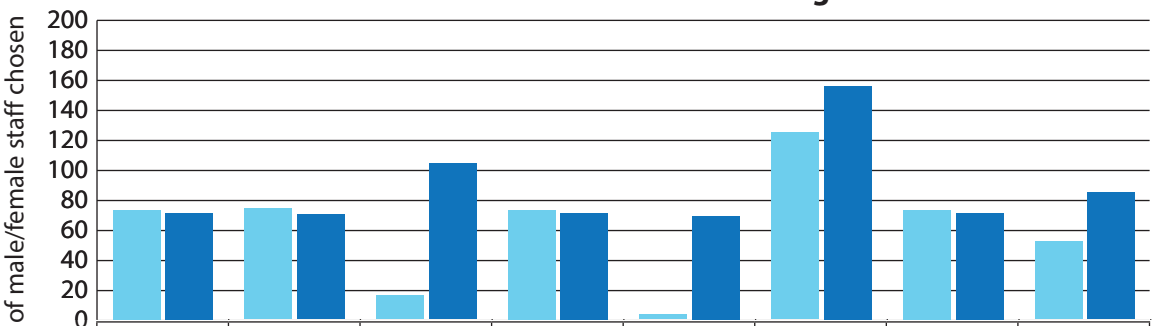
*Children were then asked to choose the teachers they would like to play with from range of activities (**Table 2**).*

Significantly these findings demonstrated that in some settings there was an equal choice of staff gender. It also highlighted the settings where the male teaching staff (and in some cases the only male manager) as being particularly proactive in engaging with the children for them to have been chosen.

Table 1: Which teacher do you like to do your favourite activity with?



Choices of activities and teachers gender



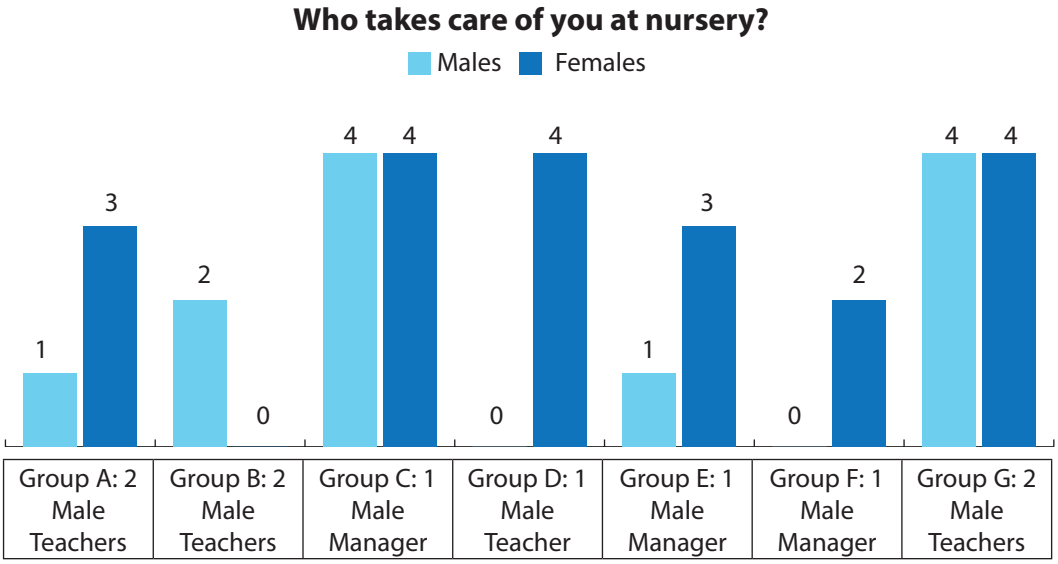
	Group A	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F	Group G	Group G:1	Group G:2
M	73	74	16	73	3	125	73	52
F	71	70	104	71	69	156	71	85

Which teacher do you like to do your favourite activity with?

Table 2

We found that given the difference in the number of males and females employed in the group of nurseries, female teachers were chosen more than 50% of the time by children when reviewing activities.

What is good to note here is that following on from the previous research; where children chose only female staff in certain activities, this was not the case here. This correlates with Cushman's (2008) findings about the androgynous nature of teaching. It was not evident in either their choices, or in their comments that gender played any significant factor in their choices.

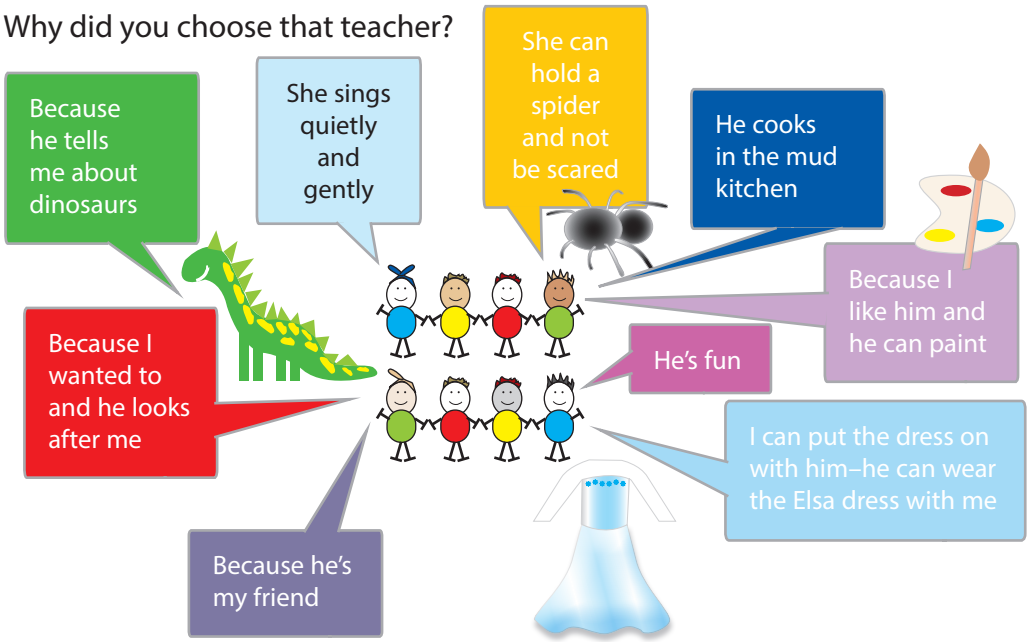


We then asked the children who 'cared for them at nursery?'

Here we noted an anomaly in the data. Group C and G scored equally in the choices of male and female teachers chosen to be caring. In Group C there was one male manager (6% of the staff team) and in group G there were two male teachers (7% of the staff team). This conflicted with the data from Group B (12.5% of the staff team) and Group F (7% of the staff team) where either no female or no male staff were chosen. We hypothesised that it was the presence of the staff within the setting and that if male teachers were perhaps seen intermittently or not as fully engaged, then the children responded by not choosing them. This may have been significant in the way children chose from the female teachers in the setting, but because the percentage of females was higher this was not as evident in how children made their choices. This data seemed to confirm that the relationships between the children and the teachers was important and influenced their choices over who the children would engage with. This appeared more significant than the gender of the individual.

Research by Cabera et al. (2000) shows that mothers are associated with food, comfort, security, and love, while fathers are associated with fun, excitement, and play. Children need exposure to both types of adult interactions.

However, most preschool environments favour women's interaction styles, verbal and literacy activities, and socio-dramatic play. In settings where the manager was male (and at times the only male) we found variations in the choices children made. In settings where managers or male teaching staff engagement was high children chose male and female staff equally. This was also significant in the settings with the same percentages of male teachers where they had not been chosen by the children.


Why did you choose that teacher?
Because he tells me about dinosaurs
She sings quietly and gently
She can hold a spider and not be scared
He cooks in the mud kitchen
Because I like him and he can paint
He's fun
Because I wanted to and he looks after me
I can put the dress on with him–he can wear the Elsa dress with me
Because he's my friend

We explored this with the focus group. By asking children about both male and female teachers, it is notable that generally the comments were similar for both male and female. The comments showed some positive progress in that children saw both male and female teachers as performing activities contrary to gender stereotypes. Children generally chose teachers who were good at particular things which they enjoyed. Children offered comments which are located in relationships for example, 'because I like him/her', 'because s/he looks after me,' were amongst comments made by both boys and girls and about both male and female teachers. Children told the researchers that they were read to by both male and female teachers.

From this focus group we found that in the nursery led by a male manager, reading is one of the activities he leads regularly. There were some very good examples of how and when reading took place…

> *'I will often lie on the floor with two or three children and read the book, holding the book in the air'.…*
>
> *In the morning when the children arrive and have breakfast, I sit on the nursery sofa and read with children in small groups or individually.'*
>
> (Male teachers examples of good practice discussed in focus group)

Female teachers were mentioned as being good at playing trains, superheroes and playing with the cars. It would be easy to think that this was where there were female only staff in the setting however it is not the case. So, what is emerging is that children are being exposed to a range of activities and are beginning not to attach a particular stereotypical gender identity to it.

Discussion

- The study found that for the majority of children selected, both male and female teachers share activities such as reading and singing. However, in certain settings male and female teachers are still unconsciously expressing gendered stereotypical behaviours and there needs to be awareness of this to ensure children are seeing a balance.
- In nurseries where a teacher is 'good at something', that person is often left to do that activity, such as gardening. Whilst this is neither right or wrong, children need to see both male and female teachers engaging in all activities – particularly those where there is a perception of an activity being better suited to either girls or boys.
- If teachers are to promote gender diversity across the sector, children must see a diverse society reflected in their nurseries, which means a balance of high-quality male and female teachers who are able to be 'good at' activities which may previously have been perceived to be gendered.
- Children associate the activity with the person not gender (balance).
- Where males are visible in the setting, and seen to be engaging in all activities, not just as 'a novelty event' children do not associate the activity with the gender.
- In some settings, where men seen in nurturing roles is the norm, masculine and feminine attributes are equally valued.
- There can be a tendency in some areas to fall back on gender stereotypes when faced with activities that are not a favourite or are unpleasant.
- Challenging children's gendered assumptions opens up dialogue that allows for other possibilities – not limiting to a gendered norm.

'Children need to see our diverse society reflected in their nurseries. It is not just about gender but the opportunity for children to have choice. It is the characteristics and attributes of the teacher that provides a rich learning environment that allows all children to embrace positive non-stereotypical gendered behaviours'.

Questions that need to be asked in nursery:

- Are we facilitating equality of opportunity through provision of resources (including for staff) for open choices?
- Are we following children's lead but inadvertently reinforcing gender stereotypes?
- Are we unconsciously (as staff) reinforcing gender bias through language and actions?

> *'If the male is demonstrating it, then you see it in the children's behaviour – it's not so black and white about (whether) it's a boy thing or a girl thing – it's not about the manliness of a man it's almost the opposite it's about a man showing the opposite….'*

The findings cause us to consider gender, not as being the black and white of being male or female (biological construct) and to think about social construction of masculinity and femininity (Butler, 2006) and the behaviours and beliefs attributed to gender equality. Attributions and characteristics belong to people not genders. Children need to see non-stereotypical characteristics, attitudes and behaviours evident in both sexes; there is a need for balance.

Examples of Practice

- Male and female teachers join in dressing up.
- Male and female teachers read with and to children.
- Male and female teachers sing with and to children.
- It's part of the nursery group pedagogy, to have sofas and to have snuggle time.

Behaviours

- Girls like rough and tumble/risky play activities – in female only settings, boys and girls named teachers who engaged in this type of play.
- Where there are proactive male teachers, children chose equally between male and female teachers with whom to play – in some settings girls favoured male teachers more than boys for their favourite.

We have found that in some settings, there are some practices that unconsciously allow or reinforce gender stereotypical behaviours.

> *'when we have more boys we have more rough and tumble play'*
>
> *'he throws them up in the air'*

Conclusions

In summary, what matters to children is the 'here and now'. What matters to them is who is 'good' at that specific activity and this is not linked to any gender stereotypical activities. They do not really have a preference. What matters is the level of expertise, with children making comments like 'he is really good at dinosaurs', or 'I like playing football with her because 'she's good at it.'

Some responses did contain gendered language, however the data suggests that the children in this nursery group are not making choices based on gender. For the children in this report, what was important was the relationships they have with the teachers.

What we found, in line with the literature (Butler, 2008, Cushman, 2005) is a need for gender flexible pedagogies, and how we can remove bias from practice and raise awareness of whether staff are perpetuating or challenging stereotypes.

Some practice does still feature unconscious gender stereotyping. This is a challenge for Early Childhood professionals to be aware of how their own values and beliefs may influence children's expectations of gender. If children see us doing something, they will follow. It is about everyone being seen to do everything. We need men to be role models for both boys and girls, and for women to be role models too, otherwise we are limiting children's life chances and choices.

The idea of 50% of staff being male seems almost impossible at this point, but more of a balance is certainly achievable. This is the most influential time of children's lives and we must take advantage of it before they enter much more gendered environments, such as primary school, where the majority of teachers are female, or secondary, where they are predominantly male. Children can realise that every opportunity is for them.

Recommendations

One of the key findings in this research is that good practice is seen where teachers (male and female) act consciously to avoid perpetuating gender stereotypical behaviours. To capitalise on these areas of good practice it is important for all working with children to raise awareness of possible unconscious bias within their practice and in the labelling of activities and resources.

A further challenge of encouraging more men to work within early childhood education and care is not unique to the United Kingdom. As a further development from this research we will endeavour to engage with colleagues internationally to pull together a fund of knowledge to inform policy and practice.

The voice of the child is important in matters that affect their lives (UNICEF, 2016). This study exemplifies the value of our group pedagogy, which focuses on the power of children's voices when their perspectives are genuinely sought, and the difficulties facing many adults who work with them, in placing children's perspectives at the centre of their practice.

Acknowledgements

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Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Centre Number

Learner Registration Number

Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals Extended Diploma

Time Supervised hours 3 hours

Paper reference **31599H**

Children's Play, Learning and Development

UNIT 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice

Part B

You must have:
Up to four sides of A4 notes from Part A

Total Marks

Instructions

- **Part A** will need to have been used in preparation for completion of **Part B**.
- **Part B** contains material for the completion of the set task under supervised conditions.
- **Part B** should be undertaken in 3 hours during the supervised assessment period.
- **Part B** is specific to each series and this material must only be issued to learners who have been entered to undertake the task in the relevant series.
- **Part B** should be kept securely until the start of the 3 hour supervised assessment period.
- Use **black** ink or ball-point pen.
- Fill in the boxes at the top of this page with your name, centre number and learner registration number.
- Complete **all** activities.
- Answer the activities in the spaces provided
  – *there may be more space than you need.*

Information

- The total mark for this paper is 65.
- The marks for **each** activity are shown in brackets
  – *use this as a guide as to how much time to spend on each activity.*

Advice

- Read each activity carefully before you start to answer it.
- Try to answer every activity.
- Check your answers if you have time at the end.

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Instructions to Teachers/Tutors and/or Invigilators

Part B set task is undertaken under supervision in a single session of **three hours** in the timetabled session. Centres may schedule a supervised rest break during the session.

Part B set task requires learners to apply research. Learners should bring in notes as defined in **Part A.** The teacher/tutor and/or invigilator needs to ensure that notes comply with the requirements.

Learners must complete the set task using this task and answer booklet.

The set task is a formal external assessment and must be conducted with reference to the instructions in this task booklet and the BTEC Nationals *Instructions for Conducting External Assessments (ICEA)* document to ensure that the supervised assessment is conducted correctly and that learners submit evidence that is their own work.

Learners must not bring anything into the supervised environment or take anything out without teacher/tutor and/or invigilator approval.

Centres are responsible for putting in place appropriate checks to ensure that only permitted material is introduced into the supervised environment.

Maintaining security

- During supervised assessment sessions, the assessment areas must only be accessible to the individual learners and to named members of staff.
- Learners can only access their work under supervision.
- Any work learners produce under supervision must be kept secure.
- Only permitted materials for the set task can be brought into the supervised environment.
- During any permitted break and at the end of the session materials must be kept securely and no items removed from the supervised environment.
- Learners are not permitted to have access to the internet or other resources during the supervised assessment period.
- Learner notes related to **Part A** must be checked to ensure length and/or contents meet limitations.
- Learner notes will be retained securely by the centre after **Part B** and may be requested by Pearson if there is suspected malpractice.

After the session the teacher/tutor and/ or invigilator will confirm that all learner work had been completed independently as part of the authentication submitted to Pearson.

Outcomes for submission

This task and answer booklet should be submitted to Pearson.

Each learner must complete an authentication sheet.

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Instructions for Learners

This session is **three hours** duration. Your teacher/tutor and/or invigilator will tell you if there is a supervised break. Plan your time carefully.

Read the set task information carefully.

Complete all your work in this task booklet in the spaces provided.

You have prepared for the set task given in this **Part B** booklet. Use your notes prepared during **Part A** if relevant. Attempt all of **Part B**.

You will complete this set task under supervision and your work will be kept securely during any breaks taken.

You must work independently throughout the supervised assessment period and must not share your work with other learners.

Outcomes for submission

You should complete the task in this task booklet.

You must complete a declaration that the work you submit is your own.

Activity 1

The research methods used in this article were interviews with children and collaborative narratives drawn from the researchers in a focus group discussion.

How have interviews or collaborative narratives as a method of data collection for research been used in this study compared to others you have researched about the issue?

Your answer should include:

- other methods of research used to explore the issue
- the reliability of the research methods used.

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Activity 2

The research article explores whether children's choice of activities is impacted by the gender of the staff in an early years setting.

The article states 'It became clear that children do not choose activities by gender but by the person who is 'good' at that particular activity'.

How do these issues and conclusions in this study relate to your own secondary research about practice in early years settings?

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(Total for Activity 2 = 15 marks)

Activity 3

The research article states 'The third layer (of data analysis) came from the teacher-researchers' reflective discussion in the focus group, holding a mirror to their own practice, values and beliefs which added a layer of thinking that has informed the findings and recommendations'.

What implications does this have for future practice which aims to provide effective learning opportunities for children in early years settings?

In your answer you should refer to the article and your own secondary research.

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Activity 4

You have been asked to investigate the involvement of male staff in activities with children by the manager of a large nursery chain of 20 nurseries.

The manager has produced the following research proposal.

The researcher will visit three settings and talk to the early years practitioners about the strategies they currently use for allocating staff to particular activities with the children.

The researcher will provide an observation tick list that practitioners can use to record when children are choosing individual staff to support them with specific activities, and whether these reflect gender stereotypes.

The observation tick sheets from each of the settings will be independently reviewed and the data collated by the researcher.

These records will be used to compare children's choices of staff based on the skills of the professional with the gender typical role for the activity.

Drawing on your understanding of research methods and your preparatory research into the role of male Early Years Educators in early years settings, provide the manager with a report that critically analyses the manager's proposal.

In your report you must cover the following:

- the ways in which this research could provide valid and reliable data analysis of the involvement of male staff in a range of activities with children
- potential limitations or weaknesses of the research proposed and how these could be addressed through suggesting changes or additions
- factors to be considered in setting up the research activities, which may include purpose and objectives, research skills and ethical considerations.

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TOTAL FOR TASK = 65 MARKS

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